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RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 0233
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 6557
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6631
RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 1214
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RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE 7142
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SUBJECT: SEOUL - PRESS BULLETIN; August 28, 2009

TOP HEADLINES

Chosun Ilbo, Dong-a Ilbo, All TVs
ROKG to Build New Apartment Units in Southern Seoul, Which Will Cost
Half the Market Price

JoongAng Ilbo
Council Suggests Broad Changes in Governing ROK;
Model Would Give Powers to Prime Minister
While Restricting President

Hankook Ilbo, Hankyoreh Shinmun, Segye Ilbo
Third Death from New Flu Confirmed

Seoul Shinmun
320,000 New Homes to be Built
in Metropolitan Greenbelt Areas by 2012

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

Yesterday, on the second day of the first Red Cross talks in almost
two years, the two Koreas agreed in principle to grant 100 South
Koreans and another 100 North Koreans a chance to reunite with their
separated families during the Oct. 3 Chuseok (Korean Thanksgiving)
holiday. (All)

The two sides, however, remained at odds over including the issue of
ROK war prisoners and abductees held in the North in their joint
statement, which is set to be announced today. (All)

Unification Minister Hyun In-taek, during yesterday's closed-door
meeting with lawmakers, said that the ROKG will start providing
humanitarian aid to North Korea, but did not disclose the timing of
such aid. (Hankook, Hankyoreh, Seoul)

Unification Ministry Spokesman Chun Hae-sung, meanwhile, reiterated
the ROKG's position yesterday that the suspended tours to Mt.
Kumgang in the North will resume only when Pyongyang guarantees the
safety of ROK tourists. (Hankyoreh)

ROK health authorities yesterday confirmed the nation's third death

from influenza A (H1N1). The victim, a man in his 60s living in Seoul, died yesterday of complications from pneumonia after being infected with the A (H1N1) flu. (All)

MEDIA ANALYSIS

-N. Korea

Moderate Hankook Ilbo and Seoul Shinmun, and left-leaning Hankyoreh Shinmun reported that Unification Minister Hyun In-taek, during yesterday's closed-door meeting with lawmakers, said that Seoul will start providing humanitarian aid to North Korea, but did not disclose the timing of such aid.

Hankyoreh also quoted Unification Ministry Spokesman Chun Hae-sung as reiterating the ROKG's position yesterday that the suspended tours to Mt. Kungang in North Korea will resume only when Pyongyang guarantees the safety of ROK tourists.

-Japan Elections

Two days before Japan's August 30 general elections, conservative Chosun Ilbo carried an inside-page article entitled "Japan Abandons U.S. and (Goes) Into Asia." The article observed that Japan's main opposition Democratic Party is certain to take power in this election and that it is publicizing its "new Security Policy" designed to proactively develop relations with East Asian countries,

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including China and ROK, while distancing itself from the U.S. The article cited influential Democratic Party officials, including former President Ichiro Ozawa, as stressing the need for an equal relationship with the U.S.

Right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo's headline read: "Asahi Shimbun Opinion Poll: 'Democratic Party Likely to Win 320 of the 480 Seats Being Contested.'"

FEATURES

US. KOREA CALLS FOR NEW APPROACH TO POW ISSUE
(Chosun Ilbo, August 28, 2009, page 8)

By Reporter Ahn Yong-hyun

The ROK Red Cross on Thursday urged North Korea to solve the issue of prisoners of war and other South Koreans still held in the North.

The call came on the second day of meetings between the Red Cross agencies of the two Koreas. The ROK delegation proposed to the North that the joint statement should include a line about "active (inter-Korean) cooperation" on South Korean POWs and abductees held in the North. The North Korean side declined to discuss the issue and insisted on talking only about the reunions of families separated by the Korean War, the main point on the agenda.

The ROK delegation called for a "new" solution to the problem, replacing the past practice of putting POWs and other South Koreans held in the North in a special category among the separated families and letting only a few of them meet their relatives during reunions.

The ROK delegation said that this proposal does not signify a specific approach at this stage, but indicates the ROK's commitment to discuss the issue of South Korean POWs and abductees in a new and intensive way.

Early last year, citing the example of how West Germany provided cash or goods to East Germany to bring its political prisoners home, the Unification Ministry proposed a phased approach that calls for verifying whether the POWs and abductees are alive, reuniting them with their families and repatriating them by offering material benefits to the North Korea.

A source at the talks said that, for the time being, using the old

method (of identifying participants to the reunions) the ROK plans to include 20 POWs and citizens held by the North in a list of 200 people, 100 from each side, who are to meet lost relatives this Chuseok or Korean Thanksgiving, which falls on Oct. 3.

The two sides were expected to reach agreement on the first round of reunions in working-level discussions before a full session on Friday morning, the last day of the talks, because there is no great difference of opinions.

There was also progress in setting the number of South and North Koreans who will be able to meet their relatives at 100 from each side. But the two delegations were still discussing whether the reunions should be held during Chuseok holidays Oct 2, 3 and 4 or, as the ROK delegation suggested, before and after Chuseok, on Sept. 27-29 and Oct. 6-8. The North proposed Oct. 3-8.

(We have compared the English version on the website with the Korean version and made some changes to make them identical.)

TOKOLA